

THE MOTION PICTURE WORLD—GOSSIP OF THE STUDIOS

THE NEW MOVIES

By Robert E. Sherwood

THE Motion Picture News, a weekly trade paper devoted to the interests of exhibitors, has assembled a jury of one hundred persons to elect the twelve individuals who have done most for the movies as an industry and as an art.

We happened to be a member of this jury, and we found it most difficult to make our selection. The problem resolved itself into a discussion as to which aspect of the motion pictures is the more important—the industrial or the artistic. That same question has flooded many movie critics before our time, and it is still the basis of all arguments about the silent drama.

Personally we are free to confess that our sympathy is all with the artistic minority in its struggle with commercialism. But in preparing a list of twelve good men and true who have been of equal benefit to both sides we felt that our deep rooted prejudice must be temporarily ignored.

This is our selection, with reasons (such as they are) attached:

Charlie Chaplin.
Adolph Zukor.
David Wark Griffith.
Charles Urban.
Mary Pickford.
Rex Ingram.
Harold Lloyd.
Samuel Rothafel.
Thomas A. Edison.
Jesse L. Lasky.
William A. Johnston.
Douglas Fairbanks.

At least half of the names on this list are so obvious as to need no explanation, and we venture to say that the majority of our ninety-nine fellow jurors will agree with us. Chaplin, Griffith, Pickford, Fairbanks and Edison require no apologies.

Some of the others, however, furnish grounds for debate.

Samuel Rothafel, for instance, is an exhibitor—and therefore a local product. His activities are limited to one theater, and he isn't even in complete control at that, as it is owned by one of the large producing companies and therefore committed largely to its private policies.

However, Mr. Rothafel has done more to develop movie presentation than any other man in the country. He was the first to experiment with the "unit program," and he has carried it to a state of approximate perfection. We believe that there is no theater in the country wherein motion pictures are so effectively presented as the Capitol, here in New York. For this reason we nominate Mr. Rothafel as the greatest of all exhibitors—greater than Dr. Riesenfeld, Joseph Plunkett, Mustbaum of Philadelphia, Partington of San Francisco or Graumann of Los Angeles.

We have included both Adolph Zukor and Jesse Lasky in the list, although they are officials of the same company, because it seems to us that they are the only big magnates who have ever displayed any respect for the artistic possibilities of the movies. Although the box office has always come first in their affections, they have made a sincere effort to improve the quality of their films—and in many cases they have succeeded.

William Fox is undoubtedly a marvelous business man, but even his staunchest supporters cannot claim that he has aided the cinema to progress as an art. Samuel Goldwyn made the attempt, but was unable to carry it out. W. W. Hodkinson is perhaps the most intelligent and enlightened of all the producers at the present time, but he lacks the financial acumen of Adolph Zukor, and it is improbable that he will ever make more than a ripple in the industry.

Albert E. Smith, the president of the Vitaphone Company, was one of the pioneers in film production, but he has failed to keep up with the procession. Joseph Schenck comes pretty close to the elect group. He has always operated on an independent basis, and has been personally responsible for the development of such stars as Norma and Constance Talmadge and Buster Keaton.

Rex Ingram is placed among the twelve because he directed "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse"—the greatest movie of them all—and has supplemented it with three photographs which possess unusual distinction.

William A. Johnston is not known to the public, but he has exerted a tremendous influence on the industry, and particularly on the exhibitors, through the Motion Picture News. This influence, he is said, has been thoroughly beneficial. Joseph Danenberg of the Fox Photo should also be mentioned in this connection.

Charles Urban has been working away at movies for some twenty-six years. He produced the first Kinema-color pictures, making films of the coronation of King George and the subsequent Durbar, which were shown at the old Garden Theater. Since then he has been an indefatigable experimenter in all varieties of fields. He has produced innumerable educational films, geographical, botanical and zoological.

The name of Harold Lloyd would remain on our list, even if we had to limit it to six. Mr. Lloyd impresses us mightily. He has made comedies galore, and every one of them has been incredibly successful. "A Sailor Made Man," we believe, has proved to be the most profitable motion picture of the year. To obtain his effects he has never hit below the belt. He has always been clean, spontaneous and straightforward.

We regret that we have been unable, in all conscience, to include any scenario writers among the first twelve. John Emerson and Anita Loos might possibly be squeezed in, but aside from them there are no names worthy of attention. It is an unfortunate fact that 99 per cent. of the persons who are responsible for movie stories are nothing more than high priced hacks, with no individuality and no literary courage. They are afraid to compose anything that has not been composed eighty times before, and they permit their contempt for the public to undermine their attitude toward their work.

No list would be complete without some citation of the press agents—those obscure fellows who make reputations for every one but themselves.

There is, for instance, Harry D. Wilson, who has established Jackie Coogan as the most famous child in the world. There are also Arah Reeve and Charles McCarthy of Paramount, Harry Brand of the Buster Keaton studio, J. E. D. Meador of Metro, Pat Dowling of Christie and Horace Judge of First National.

Press agents, as a class, may be given to unjustifiable exaggeration—but as individuals they are decidedly attractive. They retain no illusions about anything, and they know how to laugh at their more self-conscious brethren of the silent drama.

Valentino speaks.

In the January issue of Photoplay Magazine, Rodolph Valentino addresses his friends and admirers in an open letter. It contains the usual amount of bunk about "my dear public," but it also contains some frank and intelligent statements.

Having described his difficulties at the Paramount studio, he says: "My contract called for \$1,550 a week. After I had paid for many of the clothes to be worn in my pictures (and every actor requires an extensive wardrobe of expensive clothes) and had answered thousands of fan letters every week, and sent my pictures when they were requested—you can imagine I had very little left. But even at that I was willing to go on at the same salary if they would permit me to make real photoplays instead of making cut-and-dried program features, that can be hacked and torn and compressed into a given number of feet of film to fit so many cans, like so many boxes of sardines."

"When I saw 'The Young Rajah,' the last picture in which I appeared (and on which I worked day and night) I felt I had raised the issue one picture too late. I was terribly disappointed in it. I felt sick."

"I appreciate that the producers have a problem. If they turn out program pictures, all of equal length and all to be run the same number of minutes and all supposed to cost approximately the same—some cannot be as good as others."

"But I felt it was an imposition to put me in weak stories in order to bolster them up, just because the public had shown a disposition to flock to see those in which I appeared. Three or four pictures of this kind would kill me. You would say, 'We thought Valentino was great.' He isn't so good."

"While, as I said, I am not selfish for money—money means very little to me and I have gone without it long enough to be used to it—I am selfish in wanting to make good pictures. I don't want to be a cog in a machine that grinds them out in a cut-and-dried fashion."

"Art cannot be measured by inches. This is true talk, and when Mr. Valentino attacks the program he hits the evil which is at the root of all the trouble in the movies."

The process of program picture production is conducted as follows:

A large company, such as the Famous Players-Lasky, Fox or Universal, builds up a number of stars whose names are sure fire box office attractions. Then an annual program is outlined for each of these stars. They must make a certain number of pictures, which will be ready for release on schedule time.

These pictures are sold before they are made to exhibitors who appreciate the drawing power of the star's name. The director, the story and the title of the photoplay will have a certain amount of effect, but the star's the thing.

Program pictures are machine made in every sense of the word. They conform to a certain set standard in cost, in time of production and in date of issue. The company which produces them relies on its sales organization and its advertising department to put them over.

The quality of the picture makes no immediate difference, although it is bound to exercise a deadly effect in the long run.

D. W. Griffith does not make program pictures; neither does Douglas Fairbanks, Rex Ingram, Richard Barthelmess, Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin or Harold Lloyd. Unquestionably that is why their names stand at the head of their profession.

Notes.

Close on the heels of the news that Doug and Mary and Charlie and Pola are to make a world tour comes the announcement that young Master Jackie Coogan is going to Europe, probably in January.

Perhaps the infantile star will discover some new screen faces in British society, as Norma Talmadge has done. At any rate, he should make a big stir in the European capitals.

The Universal production of Booth Tarkington's novel, "The Flirt," is coming to the Rialto on Christmas Eve. It was the first of his adolescent stories, and introduced that marvelous character, Penrod Schofield.

John Emerson and Anita Loos have started West, where they will make another picture for Constance Talmadge.

We are assured that George Ade's story, "Back Home and Broke," in which Thomas Meighan appears, contains no cabaret scene, no cigarettes, no cocktail, no triangle plots, no villain, no boudoir scenes and no boot-leggers.

However, it may still be a hit.

The rumor that J. D. Williams, late of First National, is to be associated with Vitaphone in the future, is effectively nailed in the following message:

"Albert E. Smith, president of the Vitaphone Company, said to-day that the published statement to the effect that Mr. J. D. Williams is connected with the Vitaphone Company is absolutely untrue and without foundation. Mr. Williams is not associated with the Vitaphone Company in any capacity."

Screen Stars in Some of the Current Photo Plays



WALLACE REID and CARMEN PHILLIPS in "THIRTY DAYS" RIALTO THEATER



MISS ELGIE FERGUSON in "OUTCAST" LOEW'S STATE THEATER



BLANCHE SWEET and JOHN BOWERS in "QUINCY ADAMS SAWYER" CAPITOL

JACK HOLT and EVAN NOVAK in "MAKING A MAN" RIVOLI

WESLEY BARRY in "HEROES OF THE STREET" STRAND THEATER

Pictures of the Week

ASTOR—"The Town That Forgot God," directed by Harry Millard.

CAMEO—"The Danger Points," directed by Lloyd Ingraham.

CAPITOL—"Quincy Adams Sawyer," adapted from the novel by Charles Felton Pidgin. Directed by Clarence G. Badger, with a cast which includes John Bowers, Blanche Sweet, Lon Chaney, Barbara La Marr and Elmo Lincoln.

CRITERION—"Marion Davies in 'When Knighthood Was in Flower,'" directed by Robert G. Vignola.

LYRIC—Douglas Fairbanks in "Robin Hood," directed by Allan Dwan.

RIALTO—Wallace Reid in "Thirty Days," directed by James Cruze.

RIVOLI—Jack Holt in "Making a Man."

STRAND—Wesley Barry in "Heroes of the Street," directed by William Beaudine.

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Teacher of Singing.
E. PRESSON MILLER
Studio 524 Carnegie Hall, New York.
Phone Circle 1350.

OPERAS IN BROOKLYN.

"Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Pagliacci" will be given by the Metropolitan Opera Company at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on Tuesday evening, the

former with Mmes. Peralta, Anthony and Ferri and Messrs. Tokatyian, Pileo, Mr. Moranzoni conducting; the latter with Mmes. Rothberg and Messrs. Kingston, Bada, Ruffo and Schützendorf, Mr. Papi conducting.

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